

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

◆ **Intro:** I'm sure you've heard of secret codes or cyphers. Spies use them. Armies use them. The ancients had them. A code is basically secret language requiring the ability to decipher them. Sometimes codes are made on purpose to hide information. Sometimes they hide information just because no longer know the background. See how well you can read the following:

◆ [show on screen. Ask for volunteer. "fi yuo cna raed tihs, yuo hvae a sgtrane mnid too. Cna yuo raed tihs? Olny 55 plepoe out of 100 can...]

◆ If you can read that it's because you have some background in the code. How about this one? Volunteer?

◆ [show: 7H15 M3554G3 53RV35 7O PR0V3 H0W 0UR M1ND5 C4N D0 4M4Z1NG 7H1NG5!]

◆ How'd that one go? You had some knowledge to work with, right? Well there are many secret codes in life. And there are codes in the Bible. The book of Leviticus is one such book of codes, mostly because very few of us have knowledge of the culture and time in which it was written. On another level, there are some truths in God's word about what fulfilling life is, and about having a deep hope. These often *appear* as codes to us because our nature blocks us from understanding them. The OT book of Leviticus is a book about the access code to living with God.

◆ I know what you're thinking: "Oh good grief! Don't tell me we're actually going to study the Book of Leviticus! Are you for

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

real right now?" (Shh! That's a secret!) Many a well-meaning Bible reader has reached the pages of Leviticus and quickly concluded that there were no treasures to be found there. Isn't it just an obsolete code of ethics, behaviors and ceremonies?

◆(I mean take chapter 14: If someone has a infectious disease, kill a bird over fresh water in a clay pot. Dip a second, living bird in the blood, along with a piece of cedar, a scarlet yarn, and a hyssop branch and shake it onto the person to declare him clean. ...Eh,...do what? Sounds like something from the Wicked Witch of the West would do!)

◆Well, hit the pause button friends. What we need to realize is that living by the instructions of Leviticus was, in effect, a life of **constant object lessons** for the Israelites. Every rule and rite had a meaning, a reason -though much of it is lost to us without knowing the culture.

◆**1.** In this book Moses reminds the Israelites that the "key" to living close to Almighty God is holiness (the theme of the book.) But how does one find holiness? Well, **Leviticus is a book of code for finding holiness, and holiness is the key to living closely with God.** No unholy people or things need apply for living in God's community. It comes up repeatedly:

◆You'll notice from chapter 1 that only a perfect, healthy, cream-of-the-crop animal could be brought for sacrifice, because God is holy.

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

- ◆ We find out later that only strong, healthy men with no physical deformity, from one ancestral line could be priests, because God is holy.
- ◆ Only someone who had bathed and donned clean clothes could come to church. If you had a fever you *had* to stay home. If you had a disease you had to go live past the edge of camp because God is holy.
- ◆ Every rule, every ceremony, every instruction was a teaching to Israel that to have the good life with God in it, required holiness.
 - ◆ *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; **without holiness** no-one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14*
- ◆ B. Now I realize that often you and I do not *want* to live closely with God. Things very different from what he says seem very alluring to us. People like getting buzzed. People like to take revenge. We humans like indulging ourselves. All I can say to that is, eventually you are going to discover that you really do not like living outside of God's ways so why do it now? You can discover that early, or when you are old and have wasted your days, or when you die and face eternity. However, if you DO want to experience God in your life...
 - ◆ (Do you? Ever have something go downhill fast, and you wonder how it could ever turn for the better?),
- ◆ ...holiness is the required key. I urge each one of us to long for holiness, to pray that God would make us desire holiness, and

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

righteousness, and faithfulness because you take it on faith that God is more right than you are... But as we will see, holiness is not simple. This could be both exciting, and depressing! But before we get there, there are some other very important truths we don't want to miss that are foundational.

◆ **[2. God wants my good.]** In the Hebrew language in which it is written, Leviticus is titled Wayyiqra, which means "And he Called". It's stated over fifty times in the book. Just check the first line of many chapters (4:1, 6:1). You see, Leviticus takes over where Exodus left off.

◆ **A.** In Exodus God came to live in the middle of the Israelite people. He quite literally "moved into the neighborhood." He told them how to build the Tabernacle/Tent of Meeting and the last thing that happens in Exodus, after they built it, is that the Shekinah or Glory Cloud of God descends on the Tabernacle, showing that God has come to live in the middle, to "**tent**" in the middle of the children of Israel. Now he's there and he speaks, calls. He's going to teach them how they can continue to live near his presence. But what you need to understand in all of Leviticus is that the Holy God, who requires holiness, came first to live with his people *before* they were holy which can only mean that he is a God of love! He saved first (the exodus). God came *wanting* to live among ruined, sinful, not-holy humans. God didn't wait for Israel to become holy. He came to make them holy. It all points to the truth that God is terribly interested in all

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

humans and their good, and that his love is aimed primarily at them above all things.

◆*"God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ...God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ... For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" Romans 5:5-10, NIV.*

◆And this is true for you today as well. God is not, and has not been waiting until you get your life together before he gets interested in you, or starts guiding you, or calling to you, or protecting you. God is already active in your life though it may be a secret code to you so far. Your very breath is his moment by moment gift. In every moment of your existence he has been displaying his love, and inviting you into it. All of human history is about Him wanting you to know him, and to feel his love, and to live with him into forever! This is the Bible's message. He is calling (wayyikqra) to you because he wants you.

◆**B.** He is the God who makes a way for us to live with him! I want you to notice something else in chapter one. There is a sacrifice procedure that is repeated three times. Bull. Sheep. Birds. They're all exactly alike. These are three economic levels.

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

Only the wealthy in Moses day had cattle. But even the poorest could buy a bird for an offering.

◆“If he cannot afford a lamb, he is to bring two doves or two young pigeons to the LORD as a penalty for his sin.” Leviticus 5:7, NIV.

◆“If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.” Leviticus 12:8, NIV.

◆Once again, God is making a way. His love is for every economic class, people of every skill level . God isn't just inviting the wealthy to live with him. Your wealth or your ability, your accomplishment has nothing to do with God's love and attention.

◆One more hidden code: Did you notice that 3x the sacrifice is said to be a “pleasing aroma” to God(9,13,17)? What does that mean? “Pleasing” is same root as “Noah”. It means “rest”. Why was God “at rest”? Because he got to kill something? He got to let off some steam, some wrath? No. Understand, the sacrificial system was made to show the Hebrew people that God must kill sin, but yet loves sinners, so he choses to substitute for them!

That's when he is at rest/pleased.

◆So don't good brow beating yourself, friends. You've sinned again. Or you think about all the bad stuff you're involved in. The answer is not to say “Oh God wouldn't want me.” That's a cop out. He already wants you. The answer is not to think to yourself, “God is certainly looking away, not interested in a failure like me. No desire to bless me, or

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

come near my house." Not true. *Jesus came for sinners, not for good people.* The answer is to repent, and let him substitute for you. Whisper, Jesus be my substitute!

◆**3.** But now this presents a problem. **Getting close to Holiness is a dangerous problem for anyone with unholiness on them!** And that would be you and me. My sin is serious business! In the Lion, Witch, Wardrobe, Lucy entered the world of Narnia and learned about Aslan the King of Narnia, from Mrs. Beaver who said, "Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"... "Safe?" said Mr Beaver ... "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you." Well, the OT sacrificial system was saying the same thing. Lets look.

◆**A.** According to Leviticus everything is in one of three states of being: Unclean - clean - holy. You'll come across those terms over and over. "Clean" is the norm or the normal condition of most things and people. Evil or sin, or death or disease causes something to become "unclean". Obedience and faith causes something to move from unclean to clean, and even to "holy"! But rest assured, "unclean" on one end, and "holy" on the other can never meet, not without a conflict in which one side will lose, and I can tell you right now, it won't be the Holy. Holiness is potent and destroys the unclean.

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

- ◆ So for example, if a Hebrew boy found a dead squirrel in the back yard and picked it up, that would make him “unclean” according to Levitical law. It would now be necessary to offer a sacrifice, and start a period of consecration for several days, during which time he was not allowed near the church (the Tent). All this just to become “clean” again. But still not holy. That’s where the burnt offering of chapter one comes in. The holiness of God ultimately obliterates and will obliterate all that is not holy. Let's walk through it... In the burnt offering, the worshiper came to the church door, so to speak, with a prize specimen (no flaws.) No flaws?!
- ◆ B. Now the non-serious worshiper might think, “E gad, I gotta sacrifice, let’s take ol’ Three-legger over there in the corner of the pen. He's gonna get burned up anyway.” But that would be letting the Hebrew think God was no big deal, like a lot of people think now.
- ◆ (Are you living like God is no big deal? Am I? Holiness is the truth that God is a big deal. The biggest of deals. Your eternity and your present fulfillment are tied irrevocably to God! He isn’t second place to baseball. You body may play ball for a few years, but you soul will be dealing with God’s holiness for eternity. Which do you think deserves more time?)

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

◆ So here he is at church with the prize steer. He presses his hands down on it's head symbolizing his association with the animal, the transferring of his sin onto it, or it's taking of his place. Then he slits the throat with a knife, which is to say, "I deserve to die, because I am not holy". (Try saying that quietly to yourself.) The preacher catches the blood in a bowl, walks to the altar and "throws" it against the sides (our translation says sprinkles, but the Hebrew says "throw like a javelin"). Can you imagine? It's like a crime scene! Mr. Hebrew now sets to butchering the animal, and washing it inside and out! Doesn't matter that it's gonna go up in smoke. It has to be clean! God is more than clean, he's holy!

◆ So what is the worshiper learning in all this? For one he's all in. When he goes to church he and God are REALLY interacting! God's holiness is a BIG deal! No sleeping through the sermon, singing a nice song and going home. The burnt offering reminds us that sin leads to dying. It always leads to dying. When we sin, we are dealing in life and death.

◆ "For the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:21-23, NIV.

◆ "The mind of sinful man is death" Romans 8:6, NIV.

◆ "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Proverbs 16:25, NIV.

◆ *"For every living soul belongs to me, ...The soul who sins is the one who will die." Ezekiel 18:4, NIV.*

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

◆ Maybe it would be a good idea when we are making any decision to habitually ask "Will this lead to more death, or more life?" We never sin and go completely unscathed. Sin and some sort of dying are always partners.

◆ Ok, the **fire** represents what holiness does to sin. The fire, you recall, is an image for God (fiery bush, pillar of fire, fire on Sinai - it's all in Exodus). So the burnt offering shows how big a problem sin is, and how big an obstacle sin is to getting close to God. And how dangerous God's holiness is too! You don't just waltz in and say "Sup Lord?"

◆ Holiness could be likened to a sterile **operating room**.

You don't get to enter unless you're scrubbed up and super clean. Yet, God's holy presence is different from that too.

*On a physical level, a dirty person going into a clean room contaminates it. But on a **spiritual level** it's the opposite, holiness eats up dirtiness. Holiness is more potent than evil.*

So we might liken holiness to **hydrochloric** acid, or another powerful cleaning agent. Holiness dissolves sinfulness.

That's why it's a big deal for sinners like us.

◆ **Conclusion:** So here are some codes many folks walk through life missing. 1) God wants to live with men and women, to bless and to love them. There is tremendous life potential being offered us every day. We can access it if only we could work up some holiness. 2) Holiness cannot live with sin. It turns out that holiness is a real problem for sinners like us. Sin means access

WHO'S MOVING IN? LEV.1

The Ancient Access Codes #1

denied. Wrong password. Locked out. All sin and sinners eventually go up in smoke, unless something, someone takes their place.

◆ The predicament of these two codes is why God sent his son to our planet. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (skene/"tented") among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14, NIV.

◆ *But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, ...Christ came into the world, ...because by one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy. (Hebrews 10:5,14 NIV).*